Turn off the camera

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Turn off the camera

by M_1994

Summary

Hannibal Lecter, the renowned fashion designer and Alpha, picks up a stray Omega from the streets as part of a malicious plan, transforming him into a high-profile fashion model. To Hannibal's surprise, the Omega turns out to be far more than he anticipated, possessing unique qualities that defy the stereotypical views he once held. As they fall into a comfortable routine, Hannibal finds himself unexpectedly drawn to the Omega, developing deep feelings despite his initial skepticism. Just when their connection seems strongest, a misunderstanding arises, throwing their lives into chaos and threatening the bond they've built.

Notes

-English is not my first language so I apologize for the mistakes and strange words I am working on improving myself.
-I'm just writing to get rid of some daydreams so excuse my bad writing style.
-The update will be irregular and slow so don't think I dropped the story or died.
-Characters and tags will be added as the story progresses, because I do not have a final vision for it lol
-Thank you all

Threads of Power

He led a double life. Did that make him a liar?

He did not feel a liar. He was a man of two truths.

iris murdoch

The phone screen lit up the dark room, and the annoying ringing echoed in its corners. Hannibal rolled onto his side and fumbled on the nightstand. When he lost hope, he raised his buried head from the pillow.

He brought the phone close to his face and immediately regretted it as the brightness stabbed his eyes. He rubbed his bloodshot eyes but still couldn’t make out the name. "Uh, hello?" he answered, his voice came out gravelly.

"Good morning, Director There's an emergency meeting at 10:00." A voice said, Hannibal hummed and hung up, too tired to reply.

The rain tapping his windows. Through the curtains, he sees the drops running on the glass. He smiled sadly; it would have been better to stay home and play the theremin. Throwing off the blanket, he lowered his feet onto the carpet. He tilted his head from side to side, making a popping sound as he rubbed his sore muscles.

A wave of self-pity washed over him as his knees groaned in protest like a creaking door "Getting old," Hannibal thought. He looked more like he was in his 90s than his 40s. Actually, he was just worn out by his double life.

After finishing his morning routine, he headed to his office to bring the designs he poured his soul into last night; now they looked like chaotic scribbles. Hannibal's nose wrinkled. He tore up the papers and threw them in the wastebasket to burn later. With a heavy sigh, he gathered his leather briefcase and headed out.

The morning commute was a blur of gray skies and relentless rain. His Bentley cut through the downpour, wipers fighting a losing battle against the deluge. Even the soothing strains of classical music from the car stereo failed to lift his mood.

The company’s glass facade loomed ahead, reflecting the inky sky. Another gloomy day, he thought as he parked in the underground garage. greeted the guard with a nod and clocked in. His footsteps echoed on the cold marble as he made his way to the elevators. He pressed the button and waited, entered, and then pressed the 17th-floor button.

"Hold the door, please! " The guard called out, and Hannibal quickly lifted his briefcase to stop the doors. A woman rushed in, her wet, messy hair plastered to her face. She holds a coffee carrier in each hand, a gift bag between her teeth, and a purse awkwardly tucked under her arm, struggling to hold onto her things.

The Beta mumbled through the bag, "Goo... moning... dietor," which is supposed to be "Good morning, director," as Hannibal understood, so he nodded and peeked at her badge: Molly—Trainee.

Hannibal mentally took note to give Molly advice to realize what she is doing now is called slavery. not out of pity, of course, but to see what she would do. Some consider Beta to be

cowardly and peaceful. Well, the Beta he killed last week proved the exact opposite.

The elevator stopped, and both got out. Molly hurried off to HR, whose hurly-burly can be heard from the corridor. Through the glass walls, Hannibal saw the HR team, shouting and bumping into each other as they rushed, while others printed more papers or talked on the phones. Keyboards scream beneath their fingers.

He always likened them to sloths. They do nothing but sit in their air-conditioned offices and snitch on the employees. He once suggested changing their name to the 'No' Department But Bedelia didn't find it funny. As much as it fills him with gloat to see them running around like chickens, this uncharacteristic activity indicates a calamity.

Hannibal headed to the boardroom. Alana was already inside, organizing reports. The baristas were setting water bottles and cups on the table.

"Good morning, Alana," Hannibal said, smiling as he placed his briefcase on the table.

"Morning, Hannibal," Alana replied, offering him a tired smile, her voice flat.

Despite Hannibal's prejudiced opinion about Omega, Alana was an exception. With time, contempt turned into a kind of mutual respect. She joined their fashion house, Chesapeake Elite, as an intern years ago; today, she is a CHRO known for putting hardships under her feet, climbing the career ladder, and establishing her name in the company with integrity even though she cries in the company bathroom countless times.

Hannibal took off his coat and folded it over the back of the chair. He eyed her carefully underneath the makeup, Alana was hiding her exhaustion, so he wanted to fix her mood even though he was no better than her. " You look —"

“—Tired,” Alana cut in without looking up from the reports.

“Beautiful as always,” Hannibal corrected, the corners of his eyes crinkling as he smiled. Alana blushed and gave a more genuine smile. "Need help?" Hannibal offered, watching her.

"Um," Alana paused. " No, thank you. I'm done" She sorted the papers and put them in the file for the CEO, then collapsed on the chair. Hannibal took a seat across from her, giving her a moment to breathe before he asked, "So, what happened?"

"Ugh," Alana sighed, rubbing the back of her neck. "Anthony Diammond happened." Hannibal's brow furrowed; surely all this chaos was caused by Omega.

Before Alana elaborated, the door opened, and two men walked in, nodding politely before taking their seats. The baristas left, and everyone looked at Alana, wanting her to spill the beans.

Bedelia’s perfume reached Hannibal first, his ear familiar with the click of her heel. He mentally sees her walking with her chin up, her golden hair swaying in rhythm with her hips. Beneath that stoic, demure face and voice that is as soothing as a lullaby lies hidden darkness.

Alpha entered in her deep purple overcoat and a luxurious fur scarf and put her sleek black handbag on the table. She settled at the head of the table, removed her gloves, and put one leg over the other, revealing her long, smooth legs that ended with high-heeled pumps. "Shall we begin?" she asked.

Alana took a deep breath, getting straight to business "Anthony Diammond left HR in a mess. He dropped off a copy of his new contract demands, and the legal and finance teams... well, they aren’t impressed.”

Bedelia didn't waste time and started flipping through the reports. With every word she read, her eyebrows sank lower and the horizontal lines on her forehead grew. "Someone get me a drink," she ordered, leaning away from the file.

It wasn't Alana's job, but she jumped from her chair and returned with a glass of red wine and handed it to Bedelia. All present are wiser than to comment on Bedelia's behavior.

Tapping her index fingernail on the paper, Bedelia took another sip before she spoke, "So, our famous model, Mr. Anthony Diammond, refuses to renew his contract unless we comply with his terms."

She scratched a line with her fingernails under the words as she read in her feathery, bland voice, "He wants more compensation for photoshoots, runway— well, every breath he takes. Oh, and he wants us to take a smaller cut 5%."

Bedelia tilted back in her chair, meeting Hannibal's eyes. " Dimmond wants to be the main model for this month's collection, not Matthew."

Hannibal broke his classic thinker pose, moving his thumbs away from his chin, and clarified, "Anthony knows this collection is designed for the Alpha, and he lacks the required physical attributes."

Bedelia closed the file with a soft thud "These are the three I found unachievable. The rest of the terms seemed unrealistic." Sarcasm filled her voice as she continued, "From what I see and the numbers our CFO estimated, it would be better if I sold the fashion house to Mr. Dimmond," she smirked.

Franklyn scratched his forehead."I don't get it. Mr. Dimmond and I discussed the financial terms of his new contract earlier in the week, and he was eager to sign. I'm —um, a bit confused. "

"We can arrange a meeting to hear what he has to say," suggested Alana. Franklyn nodded in agreement. " Maybe I can find a compromise, something that works for everyone," he said.

Finally, the wax statue sitting with them, the company's legal counsel, Tobias Budge, spoke, sending chills down everyone's spine."We do not negotiate with terrorists," he emphasized each word with his authoritative tone.

"Terrorists?" Alana scoffed. "He’s just a model, Tobias."

Bedelia corrected."He’s not just any model, Alana. He's one of our top models who is widely popular. But if we give in to this, we’re setting a dangerous precedent."

Alana sighed in frustration. "He is pricing himself out of the market. I mean, no agency will agree on these."

"Not all, just us. He's making us a punching bag." Hannibal said, tapping his fingers on his chair arm "He got a bigger bidder, Mason Verger, at the charity gala." Hannibal dropped the bomb, enjoying the looks on their faces. This wasn't the first time Mason had stolen an Omega from them.

"His contract with us has ended. We can't force him to sign a new one." Tobias said arrogantly, leaning forward, hands on the table, his lips curving into a subtle, amused smile that held a touch of cunning. With confidence, he declared, " But we can destroy his career."

Hannibal smirked while Alana's eyes widened in concern. Franklin raised his hands in a calming gesture. "Whoa".

Bedelia raised an eyebrow and waved her hand to indicate Tobias to go on, interested in more details, so Tobias continued, "Dimmond is no saint. We know his scandals, and I've gotten him out of quite a few of them myself; all it takes is a few leaks and photos."

"His scandals aren’t exactly secret," Bedelia commented with a wry smile.

"We can’t ruin him without ruining ourselves," Alana argued, countering the idea.

Tobias shrugged, "Not if we control what gets published," keeping his calm tone to provoke the omega more. He continued, waving in the air, "A few well-placed rumors, some incriminating photos," he smirked, "Freddie Lounds will do it for free."

"No!"Alana stood abruptly, her voice louder than she intended. Bedelia almost spilled the wine on herself. She exchanged glances with Hannibal, whose pensive face betrayed that he was enjoying this tension, perhaps a little too much.

Alana waved her hand to dismiss Tobias's idea, her tone softer now. "Anthony isn't the only model we have." She pointed to the windows."We can make others look outside; there are plenty of people lining up who'd kill for Anthony's spot."

"Plus we have Randall Tier—we have talent scouts as well, and they never disappoint. Trust me, Mason will be enough punishment for Anthony."

Bedelia's fingers tapped, feeling the glass in her hands "Very well, we've already wasted enough time." and started handing out assignments." Alana and I will find someone else. But this issue needs to be handled quickly."

She looked at Franklyn. "Make sure Anthony gets his final payment. I don't want any financial loose ends." Franklyn nodded, scribbling notes.

The phone's notification music interrupted her, so she took the phone out, looked at the screen for a second, and then continued speaking, "Tobias, wait for me in my office."

"This concludes our meeting," she announced, typing on her phone. Others started gathering their belongings.

"Hannibal," Bedelia called. Hannibal stopped, turning back to face her. She waited until everyone was out "Are you involved in this?" She asked without taking her eyes off the screen. Hannibal's eyebrows furrowed in confusion.

"Tell me, did you shatter poor Mr. Dimmond's heart? "she asked. Hannibal put his hands in his pockets, his coat dangled from his arm. "It was strictly professional."

Bedelia looked at him out of the corner of her eye. "Of course it was." Before he could respond, she changed the subject. "We have a dinner meeting tonight with Kade Prurnell to discuss the Mizumono Couture collaboration."

Hannibal's nose wrinkled "I could have at my house. You know I'm very careful about what I put into my body."

"She refused," Bedelia replied, rolling her eyes. "I can’t imagine why."

Hannibal knows why, he sighed, his exhaustion creeping back in. "Of course, excuse me, I have another meeting at the fashion studio."

Homeless down in the corner

Chapter Notes

- Welcome to another chapter filled with spelling and grammar mistakes.
-I know it's a long chapter
-Thank you for reading.

"... have a smile for everyone you meet and a plan to kill them."

Brad Thor

"Tell me, did you shatter poor Mr. Dimmond’s heart? The question lingered in Hannibal's mind even after exiting the boardroom. He was honest; his relationship with Anthony was professional, at least on his part.

Company employees live on gossip; it takes less than an hour for rumors to spread like wildfire throughout the 17 floors. Due to his uncanny hearing, he knew about rumors shipping them together; some even dared to say they were dating. All because of Mr. Dimmond's inappropriate flirting and ignorance of personal space. Omega is free to harass in

the name of flirting, but the Alpha, God forbid, will be tied and burned like Ravana's effigy just for breathing.

On his way to the elevators, he saw Alana talking to someone from HR. Unlike this morning, the place was now dead silent. Alana glanced at him and nodded with a friendly smile. Hannibal returned the gesture as he continued down the corridor.

Taking the elevator down to the 9th floor, grateful that it was empty, he stepped out and nearly ran over by one of the rolling clothing racks. The employee apologized, although it was Hannibal's mistake for his absent-mindedness. Walking around here unconsciously exposes you to being run over more than at a Florida intersection. He can say from experience.

His steps were muffled on the red carpet, receiving greetings from employees who passed him carrying catalogs, fabric rolls, or rummaging through the clothing racks along the corridors like gravediggers searching for something valuable.

He almost fell when he turned right and tripped over a team bowing over the fabric as monks to Buddha. There was no shortage of tables and desks. For him, this was an insult to the fabric and an insolence to what the fashion industry represented. So, he showered them with scorching lectures, a salary discount for each of them, and threats of firing for anyone who dared to do so again, then continued to his office.

Hannibal pushed the glass door open and placed his briefcase on the desk. His watch says he still has time before the next meeting, so he takes out a coffee thermos and pours himself a hot cup, turns around in his chair to the ceiling-high window, and relaxes.

The rich aroma of coffee made his brain release dopamine, washing away his bad mood. He sipped it, savoring the warmth and bitterness on his tongue, watching the rain fall and observing the traffic below that seemed like arteries. He shifted his gaze to the glass windows of the buildings around them and watched others going about their lives. It still would have been a perfect day to play Theremin.

The sound of sirens wailing pierced the air. Hannibal looked down and spotted a man fleeing, his coat billowing behind him like a superhero's cape, with a dog racing alongside, cutting through the wind and rain as the police pursued them relentlessly, and bystanders stepped

aside in a flurry. His curiosity was eager to know the man's crime that made the police chase him so desperately on a rainy day instead of having a hot drink and eating donuts at the station.

His eyes widened like one of Margaret Keane's paintings, and his coffee cup remained hovered in the air as the chase became more intense with two cops running toward the man and his dog. Hannibal prayed that this chase wouldn't end now. The man may be a long pig, but this dreary day needed a spark.

His prayers were answered as the man and his dog dodged two cops with the skill of a rugby player, leaving them behind in a daze. Hannibal followed them intently until they had all disappeared behind buildings, and he could no longer hear the sirens. He breathed; at least someone was having an exciting day, he thought.

A knock on the door put him out of his thoughts, and he let the knocker in. The employee placed the new fabric catalog before him and excused herself to leave. He finished his coffee and began to work, examining the fabrics, sorting them, making notes, and determining the lengths of fabric they would need. After nearly an hour, he looked at his watch, closed the catalog, set it aside, and headed to the studio with his sketchbook.

He greeted his team, who raised their faces from their laptops and sketches to greet him. He sat at the head of the table, placed his sketchbook, and began the run-through meeting with the designers and stylists to review the upcoming blood in the moonlight couture and ensure everything was going as planned.

After 15 minutes of brainstorming, Hannibal was ready to shoot someone. He took a deep breath, banishing the thought, preferring to get up and head towards the mannequins. He walked along the mannequin's row and flipped through the sketchbook, checking the designs and the red notes beside each one to see how they matched the finished pieces, examined the fabric for flaws or poor stitching, and compared them to his color palette and fabric samples, looking for a discrepancy that would send someone's neck to the guillotine.

With Hawk-eye, he examined the bead embroidery for a missing one that would cause someone to give a public lecture or be fired, depending on the number of missing beads.Things were perfect, much to his chagrin. He asked the stylist team to prepare the models for the fitting while he headed to the atelier to inspect the work on the spring-summer couture, Forest Zephyr.

Finally, Hannibal felt a sense of delight when he found someone who ruined a fabric worth two years' salary. The man's eyes filled with tears after the salary deduction and a harsh rebuke delivered in a sour tone and caustic words in front of everyone.

The stylist team called him to the studio fitting room. Hannibal sat on the leather couch and the team on chairs behind him, taking notes as models entered in sequences, walking on a mini runway with serious faces and hips swaying gracefully. They stopped, turned, and posed with their hands on their waists or pockets.

Hannibal's gaze traced the graceful movements of the models, captivated by the delicate dance of fabric and the gentle undulations of satin that adorned their bodies. He paused some of them to adjust their outfits and accessories, suggesting changes to their hairstyles or makeup with the stylist team. The outfits he approved were set aside for photos to be used as a reference on the runway, while the others went back to the mannequins for more thought.

It was a productive meeting, and with no immediate pressure to resolve outstanding issues, he left early to prepare for the business dinner. He returned home, took a nap, and woke up to prepare for the evening.

Buttoning his shirt in front of the mirror, his scowled face nearly shattered the glass as if he were marching to the gallows. Bedelia had forced him to work on this collection, just as she was now forcing him to attend this dinner at a restaurant with a woman he couldn't stand—like oil and water.

He put on his three-piece suit and went to Bedelia's house to pick her up. The drive was quiet except for the classical music, and they arrived five minutes early. They stood in line outside the restaurant, waiting to get in. Hannibal mentally scoffed, What's so good about this restaurant? Yes, 5 stars, but does anyone know what goes on behind the scenes and the bribes they pay the health inspector? The line moved, and the doorman opened the door for them. The host welcomed them, helped them with their coats, and assigned them a table, offering them a welcome cocktail.

Minutes later, the host guided Kade Prurnell to their table. When Hannibal first met her in Bedelia's office months ago, he assumed she worked for the FBI. A lover of quirky fashion trends, though her prosecutor-like tuxedos deny it.

Kade greeted Bedelia with a blank face and a formal tone, then turned to him. Hannibal noticed Kade's gaze scanning him from head to toe with a hint of disdain. She joined them, and the waiter brought the menus. The two women examined it silently while Hannibal looked at the wine list and ordered Bâtard-Montrachet.

"Tell me, how was Washington?" Bedelia began in a smooth tone, hiding the fact that she didn't care.

Kade leaned back in her chair, crossing her arms like a seasoned politician, answering in a firm voice. "Promising. We've seen a lot of new people joining us—young, passionate voices ready to change things."

"I heard you were part of the sit-in outside the White House," Bedelia added with a raised brow, sipping her cocktail.

Kade smiled slightly, though it didn't reach her eyes."Change begins with action. Useless Alpha politicians won't do it for us." Waving her hand in frustration. "It won't happen overnight, that's for sure, but in the end, Omegas will get their rights and equality."

Hannibal, already irritated by the evening, hid his growing disdain behind the rim of his wine glass. Did Omegas need more? They were created for one purpose: to drain the Alphas emotionally and financially. They’re drawn to money like moths to a flame.

Kade narrowed her eyes, changing the topic, "Are you done with the collection yet?"

"Of course," Bedelia replied while replacing her cocktail with wine. "Nothing can stop Hannibal from shining." She eyed him out of the corner of her eye and added, "Especially when he knows that a portion of the profits will go to Indigent Omegas."

Hannibal tasted the sarcasm in Bedelia's voice; her smirk hid behind the rim of the glass. She wasn't doing it out of the goodness of her heart; improving the reputation of her fashion house meant more investments and collaborations.

Kade’s gaze snapped to him, sharp as glass "Oh, is that so? It's hard to imagine someone like you caring about anything but your own reflection, Hannibal." raising an eyebrow, unimpressed. "I'm surprised you even care about Omega; what with all the Omegas you've toyed with." Poison oozes from her voice as she hits her first shot.

"Here we go again," Hannibal thought; her name was on his list, and now she got extra points to be in the top 10 to die this month. He calmly, but with an edge "I thought we were here to discuss fashion, not engage in personal attacks. But if you're curious, I keep my affairs quite... separate."

Kade sneerd "Do you? then I hope to see designs that don't reflect your biases."

Hannibal met her stare, unblinking, a calm smile curving his lips."Do my facts about omegas bother Mrs. Prurnell?"

Bedelia’s smile twitches as she cuts in smoothly, sensing the temperature rising."Let's save this for later, shall we? After all, we're here to talk fashion."

But Kade wasn’t done, her voice tight with restrained anger: "Facts? You call your biased opinions facts? You've consistently demonstrated a lack of understanding and empathy towards Omegas, and your actions have caused harm to many."

Hannibal’s eyes darkened for a moment, but he smiled coldly, "I'm just trying to have an open discussion, Mrs. Prurnell. You're being too sensitive."

Kade, undeterred, pressed on: "Sensitive? You think I'm being sensitive because I'm standing up for my rights and the rights of my community? Your words have consequences, and I won't let you use your platform to spread hate and misinformation."

Hannibal licked his lips and smiled slightly. He could taste Kade's kidney on his tongue. "Just because we have different opinions doesn't mean I'm spreading hate, Mrs. Prurnell."

Kade shot back " Your opinions are rooted in ignorance and prejudice. Instead, I suggest you educate yourself on the issues and listen to the experiences of Omegas. Maybe then you'll understand why your words are hurtful and damaging."

Bedelia interrupted with a graceful smile. "Perhaps we should save this debate for another time. The food has arrived." She gulped down her wine like a gluttonous car guzzling gasoline; all this philosophical and classist baloney didn't matter to her; just finish this collection and see the numbers in her bank account.

The waiters placed their plates on the table with practiced precision, temporarily easing the tension. As they ate, Bedelia diverted the conversation to business matters, keeping Kade engaged with updates on the collection. Hannibal remained silent, swirling the wine in his glass.

When the plates were cleared, Kade and Bedelia exchanged Portfolios like a peace treaty. Hannibal and Bedelia checked the portfolio, their mouths gaping, exchanging "Wtf?" gazes. They raised their heads to meet Kade, but she was still looking at the catalog with a blank face; she sighed and leaned back in her chair, interlocked her fingers, and put her hands over her crossed legs"I will admit the designer's brilliance." Her face didn't indicate that. Hannibal licked his lips, and Bedelia raised her eyebrows in anticipation.

"But the models don't fit my vision." She added with a frustrated sigh, closing the catalog with her fingertips. Bedelia crossed her arms and leaned back in her chair, tapping the floor with her foot; she was always meticulous in choosing models who rivaled the beauty goddess herself.

Kade noticed Bedelia's wounded dignity but didn't care. "Stereotype is part of the problem, and it’s why I’m here—to change the way people like you think." Her last word was directed at Hannibal personally with a stabbing gaze under her blonde lashes.

Hannibal raised an eyebrow "Change? Through fashion, no less?"

"Yes," Kade shot back. "Through the very thing you claim to be a master of. Fashion reflects society, and I plan to use it to challenge stereotypes. That includes your runways, Hannibal. I

don’t want models that fit your outdated views."

She keeps stirring up the hornet's nest. In Hannibal's mind, he saw her choking and blood gushing from her throat and mouth as he cut her open with a broken wine bottle. "Interesting vision," Bedelia interjected smoothly, pulling him out of his dreams. "But let's focus on what’s achievable, shall we?"

Kade gave her a long look before continuing. "My collection will feature all shapes, sizes, and personalities—strong, hairy, petite, muscular omegas. Alphas who aren't towering figures of perfection. Betas who defy expectations. It’s time we dismantle these antiquated roles and present people as they are."

Hannibal's lips twitched as if he were suppressing a laugh. "Is that what you believe will change the industry? A few unconventional models?"

Kade leaned forward, her voice low and firm. "It’s more than just models, Hannibal. It’s about changing the way people see each other. You might think it’s trivial, but this is about representation. And that matters."

Her phone rang. She glanced at the screen, then rose from her seat. "Sorry, I need to take this. It’s urgent." Hannibal’s gaze followed her as she disappeared from view. Bedelia leaned toward him, her voice low. "Careful. Or the next protest will be in front of your house."

"My face wouldn't look good on protest signs," Hannibal mocked, sipping his wine.

Bedelia smiled lopsidedly as she pushed her golden hair away from her shoulder. "You should worry more about torches and pitchforks."

Everyone's heads turned at the sudden glass shattering; the woman's hand was still frozen in the air. The host immediately went to the poor man and his wife. Hannibal peeked at the couple, a man and woman, perhaps in their 60s, whose clothes were old but preserved for special occasions. It was neat but not enough for the restaurant, and the host knew this and was waiting for the right moment to kick them out, and it came to him on a silver platter despite their offer to pay for the broken glass.

The couple went out with heads bowed like Roman soldiers who lost the battle. The man covered his wife, protecting her from stabbing glances and blaming whispers. The host apologized to everyone and asked them to enjoy their meals.

Kade returned moments later, looking at her watch. "I have to leave. Washington calls. But I trust you'll understand my vision?'

Hannibal gave a polite nod. "Oh, we understand, Mrs. Prurnell. We'll work to bring your vision to life."

Kade didn't seem fully convinced but nodded curtly. "We'll be in touch. Enjoy the rest of your evening." That sentence was meant for Bedelia only, but Hannibal didn't care; he had other things on his mind. He'd just found someone ruder than Kade.

After dinner was paid for and the host bid them farewell, Hannibal etched the host's features into his mind. There was something about how the host handled the situation with the couple earlier that irked him—a cruelty that hit too close to home, but he kept his outward calm.

Hannibal drove Bedelia home, pretending to be interested in tomorrow's meeting. But his mind was working on another plan entirely. Back at home, he stood for a moment, studying his reflection in the mirror. Slowly, he began to change his clothes. A black leather jacket and trousers replaced his elegant suit. He put the helmet on his head. This wasn't Hannibal, the fashion designer. This was the Ripper, and the night was his now.

In the garage, Hannibal stood in front of his covered motorcycle. In one smooth motion, he removed the cover. The sound of the engine broke the silence of the night. As he drove back to the restaurant, his thoughts were on the host, who hadn't realized he had already judged himself.

He left the motorcycle on a side street and looked around for unwanted eyes, then slipped under the cover of darkness, hiding in the steam. His shadow reflected on walls as he passed with ghost-like stillness. Water droplets splattered off his shoes as he stepped on puddles in the dented street, distorting ripples.

Grateful for the darkness, barely lit by a sad bulb on the restaurant's back door that sent out a dying-sick yellow light that moths swarmed. He hid in a dark alley overlooking the door, watching and planning.

About 10 minutes later, he heard the dumpster lid opening. He thought it was a waiter disposing of bags of wasted food they call garbage. Hannibal popped his head out from the corner, and his mind was playing tricks on him because he saw a giant rat bending in the dumpster and a dog wagging his tail.

Hannibal's eyes widened like a cat in the dark, trying to take in the scene. The annoying crinkling of plastic, the sharp ringing from the bottles, and the constant rummaging broke the silence he was trying to keep.

"Found it," the giant rat whispered to the dog as it lifted a garbage bag and dragged it out. From its fur grew two human legs that slid smoothly from the dumpster to the ground—not a giant rat but a human wearing a coat similar to rat fur coming out of a sewer.

This homeless doesn't look any different from the models in Kade's portfolio. Hannibal mentally mocked, and then the idea popped into his head as popcorn, and Kade's voice repeated in his ears like a damaged cassette tape."My collection will feature all shapes, sizes, and personalities."

Fueled by his desire to expose Kade and Bedelia's hypocrisy and curiosity to see what would happen, Hannibal emerged from the darkness like a specter of doom, his face slowly unfolding under the fading yellow glow. With a deceptively calm voice, masking his true motives, he grinned widely, his sharp teeth glinting like daggers that had bitten into countless victims. He asked, "Are you interested in earning your meal?"

consequences chasing me right now!

Chapter Notes

-Sorry for the mistakes.
-It is not love if both parties do not try to kill each other.
-My omega baby is on his way to the spotlight but he needs a bath first.

Well, well, well,
POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS
POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS
if it isn't the
HOMELE AND HUNGRY
consequences of my own actions.

"it takes only a moment for the destiny to flip over."

Jyoti Arora

The garbage bag landed gently on the ground, almost as if it were weightless. For a brief moment, the sound of plastic and bottles rubbing together filled the silence, and then the bag burst open, spilling out a bounty of treasures. The joy was reflected in the beaming smile of the homeless man and the way he lovingly stroked his dog’s fur, which wagged its tail in pure delight.

The man pulled out a bottle, likely champagne. He gave it a little shake near his ear, then tipped it just enough to peek inside, setting it aside when he saw no hope, and pulled another, doing the same thing. No trace of disappointment on his face—almost like he figured there wouldn't be a drop left, but hey, it was worth a shot.

His arm and head stretched inside the bag as if it were bottomless, taking out something. He wiped it clean with his palm, brushing off the remnants, and whispered, "Meat," before giving it to the dog, which devoured the piece greedily.

After a second of fiddling in the bag's bowels, spaghetti came out wriggling between the man's fingers like earthworms, and the dog got the biggest share. He was still chewing while his dog wiped the floor with its tongue, erasing any evidence of the sauce. A tin can was pulled from the bag and slipped into his pocket, ignoring its expiration and potential toxicity, before he went back to diving again.

Hannibal reached the breaking point of the miserable and unhealthy scene. The mass of smells wafting at once overpowered his nose. The dog's head snapped in his direction as he took his first step out of the darkness; one low growl was enough to notify its owner of the intruder and make him stick his head out of the bag.

"Are you interested in earning your meal?" Hannibal grinned widely, asking with a deceptively calm voice, masking his true motives.

What followed that question was dead silence and a German staring contest. Hannibal waited for a response—any reaction other than blinking. He tilted his head and raised an eyebrow in question, but all he got was crickets. Then he noticed the man's hand stealthily creeping toward the bottles beside him, his thin fingers slithering up the neck and wrapping around it like snakes. The dog's ears perked up while its limbs were splayed wide in readiness.

Hannibal raised his hands in fake surrender. He could easily fend off the man's attack, but the dog? Using his tongue rather than his fist is better than going to work with a limp leg and blue bruise. In a last-ditch effort, he changed the offer "I'm Hannibal Lecter. I have an offer of $1,000 for you."

$1,000 wasn't a lot of money, but for someone in need, it would definitely make a difference. And if the homeless man tried to negotiate, he could always pay more.

Hannibal didn't see a flicker of greed in the man's eyes, nor did he salivate for money. The gears of his mind weren't turning toward the tempting offer. Instead, he saw the man's fingers tightening around the bottle as he rose from the ground, his focus unwavering. The dim glow cast an eerie, ghostly shadow over him. The dog's front legs flexed, his back arched, and its tail rose like a red flag, declaring his absolute loyalty to defend his master.

The corner he was hiding in was a dead end; the only way out was to pass over the man and his dog. So Hannibal kept his cool. He'd been in plenty of fights and could survive another.

Clang! The metal door of the restaurant swung open, and a startled voice exclaimed, "What the—!" In an instant, the homeless man and his dog flew away like bullets, and the man chased after them, yelling, "You mother fu*... you again!" Hannibal quietly retreated into the shadows.

Moments later, the man stormed back, his nostrils flaring as he cursed under his breath, kicking the trash, which sent bottles clattering wildly into the corner. The metal door banged shut, followed by a sharp *click*. A dim glow flickered in the shadows, and the acrid scent of burning tobacco drifted through the alley.

Chance is sometimes the perfect accomplice to crime. This was the familiar voice Hannibal had heard a few hours ago—his target, the host. He waited for more people to show up, but none did. So he bent down, rolled the bottle toward the host's feet, and hid further into the shadows, his breath steady, like a clockwork rhythm.

Thunderous footsteps followed, and the host's insults rained down on Hannibal, mistaking him for another homeless person. His shadow on the ground kept getting closer, and the second he turned, Hannibal caught him off guard with a swift blow to the throat, cutting off any breath.

The cigarette slipped from his fingers, scattering sparks and ash on the ground like dying stars. The host clutched his throat as choking noises and smoke escaped his lips. With a vicious kick to the leg, Hannibal forced him to his knees. The host's face paled with panic, but before he could react further, Hannibal spun behind him, hands gripping his head.
Snap.

The host collapsed lifelessly onto the ground. Without hesitation, Hannibal dragged the body into the shadowy and went back to retrieve his bag from the motorcycle. He had intended just to observe, but he never showed up unprepared.

Reappearing in his plastic suit, preparing for his masterpiece. Hannibal took out a scalpel and cut the corpse's cheeks with the blade, then used his hands to forcefully stretch the skin with his hands until the jaws were torn apart, wide like a horrific grin.

He took out the champagne bottles, crushed them underfoot until they shattered into shards, and stuck the pieces into the corpse's swollen tongue. The scalpel danced across flesh, tracing from the chest down to the abdomen with surgical precision. Hannibal worked quickly, removing the lungs, heart, and kidneys; each organ was placed with care into ziploc bags.

Next came his macabre flourish: He went to the trash can and silently emptied several bags, twisting them into crinkle shapes, then stuffed them into the now hollowed torso cavity. He sewed up the incision with a surgeon's skill more than a fashion designer. Propped the body against a trash can, arranging its limbs like a puppet, twisted and lifeless. More glass shards were scattered around the corpse. He took a moment, observing his work with the satisfaction of an artist admiring a completed painting.

After removing his plastic suit and carefully stowing it alongside the organs in his bag, Hannibal collected the bag and mounted his motorcycle, leaving behind a masterpiece in blood, glass, and trash bags.

The chilly rain swept through, clearing the last few souls from the streets and ensuring his safe arrival. He parked the motorcycle in the garage, carefully covered it, and shut the door behind him.

He turned on the lights inside the house, stashed his harvest in the fridge, and headed to the bathroom. Hannibal put the bag aside, stripped off his clothes, and stepped into the soothing, warm shower that revived his weary body.

Suddenly, a jolt of realization struck him: the host was familiar with the homeless man, which meant he frequented that place. The homeless man would inevitably return and either be caught red-handed or report the crime himself. In both cases, Hannibal told him his name.

Hannibal rushed out of the bathroom, naked and glistening, swiftly pulling on his leather suit. He snatched his bag and took his car this time—not wanting to attract attention and making it easier to hide the body in the trunk.

He parked the car far away because it was too late. Police vehicles and barrier tape surrounded the scene; they had discovered the body. He could feel the noose tightening around his neck. He was never reckless, yet here he was.

He got out of the car, joining the onlookers gathered behind the yellow tape, watching as the covered body was loaded into an ambulance and investigators busily examined the crime scene. He scanned the area—no homeless man, no dog. He had to find them before the police and get rid of them. How hard could it be to find a homeless person? Just look in alleys or under bridges.

---

2 weeks later

As he was busy gathering his belongings and placing them in his briefcase, the glass door to his office swung open. Hannibal didn't take his eyes off the papers in his hands. He knew it was Bedelia from her perfume and the click of her heels—she was undoubtedly the only person bold enough to enter his office without knocking or waiting for permission.

She leaned against the glass door and raised her eyebrows. "Are my eyes tricking me, or is Hannibal Lecter asking for leave? Is it the apocalypse?" Her eyes narrowed. "Are you dying?"

Hannibal smiled calmly, placing his pen inside his bag. "No, my health is in excellent condition. I just need a little rest."

Bedelia approached the desk. "The last time you asked for leave was when... Well, never. What's going on, Hannibal?" Her eyes scanned his face.

Hannibal met her gaze, keeping his composure. "Nothing to worry about. Just some personal matters that need my attention."

"You know I can read you very well... Are you in trouble?" She stared at him, unconvinced.

He turned to her. "It's all because of exhaustion, Bedelia. I'll work from home if anything important comes up. But I need some distance... to organize my thoughts."

She crossed her arms. "You're not the type to take distance. What's really going on?"

Hannibal smiled coldly and finished packing. "Let's just say that even the greatest minds need a lull every now and then."

Bedelia stepped aside to make way for him. "Make sure you come back."

He stopped at the door and looked at her. "Goodbye, Bedelia." He exited, leaving her staring at the closed door with a worried look.

How hard could it be to find a homeless person? Just look in alleys or under bridges. That's what he told himself two weeks ago before he plowed through every alley, bridge, and dark corner of the city. He asked other homeless people about the man and his dog, but they either ran away from him or lied, despite being bribed, as if they had a pact not to snitch.

As if his major problem wasn't enough, now he had to deal with this new issue. He could hire a team of the best lawyers in the country and walk away untouched, maybe even seeking compensation for emotional and financial damages. Plus, he had Tobias Budge as a last resort. But things wouldn't get that bad.

Yes, no one would believe a homeless man over him with his pristine, white-silk reputation. But a case like this will cut through that white silk with dull, rusty scissors. In the world of

celebrities, all it takes is one small mistake to pull the rug out from under his feet and have him remembered as another Vlad the Impaler.

His top priority, however, was Milan Fashion Week. The remaining months seemed long yet short when there was nothing new in his head. Inspiration—that's what his position as head fashion designer was all about. Being creative and starting new trends required a clear mind, not one haunted by a homeless man.

As Hannibal approached his garage, he suddenly yanked the wheel and slammed on the brakes, the tires screeching in protest. His hands remained on the steering wheel. He must be delirious because he searched for that man and his dog under every stone and inside all the burrows and found nothing. Yet they were right there, throwing themselves in front of his car.

God, he wanted to shake the man until his bones fell apart and his blood fizzed like soda. Hannibal got out of the car, feigning coldness. How did the homeless man know his house? Did he know about the crime? Did he come to blackmail him? Either way, his feet had led him to his death.

Hannibal opened his mouth to speak but stopped when the man's chin twitched, and tears streamed down his face." Please help him!" the man begged.

"Please" always had its charms. It made him feel powerful and superior. It did now, even in the worst of times, but he had to kill the witness. Quickly. He wouldn't prolong the suffering of the man—life had already crushed him enough. The man wasn't a pig; no reason to insult him. He will bury him in a decent place. With or without his dog, God will decide.

"Please!" the man begged again, tears racing down his cheeks, sweeping away the dirt. His painful sobs tore at his chest. "I'll do whatever you want. Save him, please!"

Every breath the homeless man took was a death sentence for him. If he let him go, he would destroy his world. Many had begged him before. He had his fair share of tears, snot, and pleading words, deafening his ears. But this was different.

The ripper in his mind shouted to kill him, but something about the man's desperation hit close to home: the feeling of not being able to save your loved one's life, so he made a decision to only save the dog—granting the last wish of a man who would soon be killed.

Hannibal got into the Bentley and set the GPS for the nearest vet clinic. On the way, his gaze shifted between the road and the man's reflection in the rear-view mirror. The man continued to wail about his dog.

Tears sting Hannibal's eyes—not his tender heart, of course—but the overpowering smell destroys the olfactory bulb cells in his brain, and his sinuses burn, crying out for help. Without a second thought, he opened the car window, indifferent to the cold air sweeping in, no longer able to bear the smell of the decomposing body in the back seat, and wet fur was too much for his poor nose.

" What happened?" He asked flatly, eyes still on the road.

The homeless man sniffled, trying to stop his runny nose. "They attacked our tent," he said, wiping his face with the sleeve of his coat. "We got robbed... someone kicked him in the chest." Hannibal nodded in understanding. Many thought he was an easy target when he had been looking in all the wrong places for the past two weeks.

"There! There!" the man shouted, gesturing wildly. Hannibal turned as directed, ignoring the GPS's urging to reverse. After several minutes of driving through eerily quiet streets, doubt crept into his heart. His GPS showed no sign of any vet clinic nearby. Was this all a ruse? Was he being lured into some remote area where a gang lay in wait?

Hannibal looked at his sleeve, where his scalpel had been resting for the past 2 weeks. He didn’t know when he might need it—to slice the throat of a thug or someone foolish enough to think he was an easy target. In a flash, he could turn and end this homeless man’s life.

The man suddenly shouted, "Stop! Stop!" jumping out of the moving car with the dog in his arms. Hannibal hit the brakes hard and bolted out to scold that idiot; before he could speak, the dog unexpectedly landed in his embrace. Without missing a beat, the man roughly directed him toward the clinic and shoved him inside.

Too much shock and rudeness for his mind to handle, but the doctor snapped him out of his surprise. Hannibal handed him the dog and told him it had been mistreated. The doctor asked him to wait while the dog was taken to another room to be examined.

Hannibal settled in the waiting room, crossing his legs, his eyes drifting to the hanging paintings of various animals. He never imagined himself in a place like this. He would never own an animal; fur was his number one enemy, even in his designs. His nose wrinkled, and his lips twitched as the idea of white cat hair stuck to a black piece of fancy fabric passed through his mind.

He looked out the window when he heard the rain. He spotted the homeless man outside, pacing back and forth like a pendulum, biting his nails, unaware of the downpour drenching him. Hannibal gestured for him to come inside, but he ignored him and kept panicking outside. Well, he tried, hoping the rain would make this man smell less horrible.

Hannibal checked his watch and wondered if the dog's condition was that bad. Just when he couldn't stand to wait any longer, the door opened, and they came out carrying the dog. The nurse placed it on the counter.

The dog looked somewhat lethargic. "Don't worry," the doctor said, reassuring Hannibal while typing on the computer. "There are no fractures; he needed a gastric lavage." He sighed and raised his glasses above his head, looking at Hannibal. "Poor dog left to be tortured by this homeless monster."

"So he was here before," Hannibal thought as he paid, admitting to himself that the doctor was a bit dramatic. He picked up the dog and headed for the door. The doctor followed him, waving. "Thank you for saving a stray's life."

The homeless man got out from behind the Bentley and raised his two middle fingers at the doctor's face. Meanwhile, Hannibal carefully put the dog inside. Hannibal's eyes widened at the rudeness, as did the doctor's. 'Well, this homeless man is going to the oven,' Hannibal decided before sliding into the driver's seat and speeding away.

"That was rude," Hannibal said, glancing in his rearview mirror, his fingers lightly drumming on the steering wheel.

"Rude?" The man’s voice was raspy like the cold had stolen away its softness. "I begged that as*hole on my knees to help him."

"He said I should die like him, and if it were up to him, he would shoot every homeless person he saw," the man continued, his voice trembling with anger and hurt.

"Oh, wait...I won't waste my meds on a mangy dog." He said it sarcastically, imitating the doctor.

His hand, trembling as he wiped his nose with his wet sleeve, smeared more dirt across his face. "He threw me out, and when you came with your suit and car, he thanked you for saving a stray life."

Hannibal drummed his fingers lightly on the steering wheel. He found four targets in one night.

The man's eyes were wild with frustration; bitterness welled in his chest. After minutes, he asked, "Is he going to be okay?" his hand barely touching the dog's fur as if it would turn to ash between his fingers.

Hannibal kept his eyes on the road, his expression unreadable. He could end it now, leave this behind, and pick someone else. Or he could take his benefits first. He'll send the homeless man's photos to Bedelia and Kade. The man will be under his nose all the time, like a marionette puppet. If they accept him, he'll control his strings; if they don't, he'll cut them and throw him off the stage.

"He has three cracked ribs," Hannibal replied, his voice heavy with fake sorrow. "If we take good care of him, he will survive." His tone was laced with a feigned sadness and defeat.

The dog raised his head, looking at Hannibal with judging eyes as if he understood English, and barked, "Liar." The bark was faded and like a cry, which made the homeless man's eyes rain again. Hannibal smiled and mentally thanked the dog for confirming his lie.

Hannibal sighed, sticking his head out the window, thinking, His Bentley needs to be burned; there's no use in trying to clean it.

Beneath the Surface

Chapter Notes

-Thank you so much for the comments and the kudos they mean a lot to me.❤️🌹 Thanks for continuing to read.
-This chapter is very long. I was planning to split it up, but I'm too lazy to design another cover. 🤡🫣
-Night-blooming jasmine is the only flower I know.
-The painting is *Leda and the Swan* by Francois Boucher, 1740, so I know it's not a duck.😅

Omega! Out of all the homeless people in the city, he picked Omega, tucked away under layers of stink that masked the pheromones and fooled his sensitive nose.

A few hours ago

The only sound was the steady rhythm of winter rain drumming, each droplet exploding before bouncing away from the black metal body. Hannibal gripped the steering wheel

tightly, his eyes on the road, but couldn't resist the fleeting glances in the rearview mirror at the backseat passengers. They didn't exchange a word for 20 minutes.

The man's forehead rests on the cold window. His hand gently settles on the dog's head, sleeping on his thigh, while his other hand relaxes in his lap. His puffy eyes are fixed on the rain-soaked view outside; everything looks a bit hazy.

How did he know his house? As much as this bothered him like an itch he couldn't reach, he preferred to ask the man at home, near the basement.

When the silence became unbearable, Hannibal broke it with his smooth voice. "What's your name?"

"Does it matter?" The man answered without taking his eyes off the hazy scene.

Hannibal's gaze flickered with amusement. "Everything matters." After what felt like forever, the man exhaled, “Will.” Hannibal nodded, not pressing for more, and the dead silence covered the car again.

Minutes later, they arrived home, and Hannibal slid the Bentley into the garage, letting the engine’s purring fade. The noise died, and Will blinked, slowly coming to his senses. His eyes met Hannibal’s hazel eyes in the rearview mirror.

Hannibal reached the handle and stepped out. Will's hand hovered over the handle, not daring to open it, so Hannibal didn’t rush him and went to light the garage and house.

After 5 minutes, he reappeared, carrying a water-plastic bowl and putting it aside. Moving some stacked boxes, he pulled out an old blanket, emptied another box, tore its sides, laid it on the floor, and covered it with the blanket.

Will watched him tear the box apart and imagined his own body in its place. It's not death he's worried about; there is a fate worse than death, but no point in delaying the inevitable.

Will opened the door and stepped out, then bent to lift Winston carefully, whispering, "You okay, buddy."

“Dog staying here tonight,” Hannibal said in a calm voice, but his tone wasn't up for debate. His steady gaze never left Will, who was holding the dog in his arms like a wooden statue.

He stepped back, noticing how tightly Will clung to the fur, not ready to let go of his child. As much as he wanted this to be over, he didn’t rush him. “This is going to be a long night,” he thought.

Eventually, Will knelt, his hands shaking as he gently placed the dog on the blanket, his eyes never leaving Hannibal for a moment, trying to read his intentions. Everything seemed calm, but he couldn't escape the feeling of danger.

"He’ll be fine. Let’s go," Hannibal said, walking toward the door. Will swallowed. He gave Winston a soft pat, promising himself he would survive and see his furry friend again.

Will peered down the corridor, which seemed endless. A wave of warmth touched his nosetip and cheeks, yet the sleek gray walls and dim lighting heightened his fear and suspicion, sending shivers down his spine. He swears that the classic portraits on the walls stare at him.

He choked on the Adam's apple lodged in his throat. His hands clutched to his wet coat, feeling the raindrops gathering in his fists. Mentally, he laughed at his stupidity. What did he expect from an Alpha lurking in a dark alley?

Hearing his father in his mind, "Don't trust the Alphas; they're all the same." His instincts beg him to run, but he can't leave Winston. If he runs, he risks serious injury, or worse, the Alpha might set him up for something out of spite.

Biting his lip, he remembered the police chase weeks ago. They would tear him apart if they caught him again. Either way, he would be dead, so he sighed and dragged his legs, boots scraping the floor, making a grating noise, protesting his stupidity for entering the Alpha’s lair.

Once the toe of his shoe crossed the threshold still in the air, the Alpha turned, "Take off your boots and coat," his tone steady yet commanding.

Will was petrified in his place, his foot still in the air, looking at the Alpha's unreadable face. Mentally cursed himself for saying he would do anything. Now, the Alpha won't budge, demanding what was promised.

He gave up and bent down to untie his shoelaces. Not the first monster offering him money for sex or selling drugs—that is what people always think when they see a homeless person.

The knot slipped repeatedly as a clear sign to flee, but he was stupid enough to ignore it, claiming it was just his clumsy fingers. He took off one shoe, revealing a once-white sock that was now coffee-colored with many holes that showed a blue layer beneath. The other foot was the same, just with fewer holes.

His shoulders drooped, and the heavy coat slid from his arms to the floor like a lowered flag, making a muffled thud, and water splashed around it. Taking off his coat is taking off his armor, losing his pride, and accepting the offer.

He will not point fingers at his dog but at himself for letting his guard down and getting robbed in the first place and blame the Alpha for being a d*ck who took advantage of his misery and need.

The moment the coat fell, Alpha's eyes studied him from head to toe, stripping him. Yes, he was wearing a shirt and pants, but he felt naked and chilled to the core despite the warmth of the house.

Hannibal wasn't about to let his shiny floor get ruined by those muddy boots wrapped in duct tape or the wet rat fur that left brown drops trailing to enter his house. Seriously, the rain only made it dirtier and stinkier.

He studied Will, mentally taking his measurements to send with the digitals. Under good lighting, the man looks even worse. Crazy charcoal-colored hair and beard reminded him of the bald eagle's nest. Colorful eyes are surrounded by dark circles like a panda, and cheekbones stick out like Everest's peak.

Can this man get any more miserable? Hannibal asked himself. And the answer was yes. When his gaze followed the long neck downward. Adam's apple is jutting out like a dagger. An empty shirt hides a fleshless frame. A peeling leather belt is tied around a bony waist. Ripped jeans over knees that look like a knot of bone, almost piercing through the skin.

"How many of you are there?" Will's voice cut through the moment, snapping Hannibal out of his thoughts and shifting his gaze to Will. His brow twitched. "At home?" Will added, the unease thick in his tone.

Hannibal's expression shifted. Was Will asking to know if he was alone? The ripper's paranoia kicked in, sharpening his fangs. Was this man planning something? He took a step forward, and Will retreated 10 into the garage, his back hitting the cold frame of the Bentley, eyes wide.

As a cat stalking a bird, Hannibal stepped, "Why do you ask?" His voice was soft, like the hiss of a serpent. He circled the car, dragging his fingers along its sleek black.

Will ran in the opposite direction, breathing quickened, and peeked around, desperate for an escape, his pulse hammering in his ears. "To know how many will... rape me, you sick monster!" Trembling with fear and fury.

Winston, sensing the tension, staggered up and barked weakly, its voice strained. Will ran and stopped him without taking his eyes off Hannibal.

Hannibal froze. The accusation sliced him like a blade, feeling his blood turn hot. The mere suggestion fueled fire within him. A rapist? The thought of being seen as one of those... long pigs he had butchered, that filth who deserved to die, sent a surge of rage through his veins.

His face remained stone-cold, unfazed by the barking or Will’s words. But beneath that surface, the insult festered. His hands tightened slightly. But if he fumed now, it would only make things messier and alert the neighbors. The man before him is already shifting from foot to foot, torn between attacking or keeping his dog safe.

Hannibal stepped back, putting his hands in his pockets, a gesture meant to disarm, and returning to the doorway. "Just me, Will. And you're not here for that... the money for a decent job."

Will didn't believe him—how could he? In his eyes, Hannibal was just another monster. He kept the car between them as if the metal body could shield him from whatever the Alpha might do next.

Hannibal continued, his tone calm yet tinged with something darker."You are free to leave, Will." In fact, if he tries to leave, he'll be forced to kill him. "Think about it; I'll be in" the kitchen

The minute Hannibal was out of sight, he ran with the stealth of a ninja to the electrical box, hit the switch he had set up two months ago with a camera after catching a foolish thief trying to steal his Bentley, and ended up stuck in the fridge. Now, Will can't get the garage door open.

He slipped off the leather jacket and returned to the kitchen behind the island. He took the scalpel out of his sleeve and will count to 10; if the man didn't show up, he'd go to finish him.

Closed his eyes and started. 1, 2. His thumb caressed the scalpel. 3, 4. Swiftly, he'll cut the carotid artery. 5, 6. He found a good place for the grave.7, 8. The family down the street would adopt the dog. 9 He grated his teeth, and his hand clenched around the scalpel. 9.5.

Opening his eyes as he heard the footsteps. Will stood before him, and Hannibal saw his shaky hands tearing his ripped pants."Tell me more... about the job?" the nervous voice inquired.

Hannibal hid the scalpel, his lips curling into a smile as he licked them. “Patience is a virtue. I’ll fill you in at dinner. But first, I think a warm bath would do you good.”

Will’s eyes widened, and Hannibal had to fix the confusion quickly. “No! Not what you think,” he added. “You need to bathe, Will. The guest room is upstairs, second door on the right.” He said his piece, then went to the fridge to take out the ingredients to prepare lung and loin bourguignon.

Will’s feet moved as if he were walking through a minefield, his gaze fixed on Hannibal as if he would pounce the moment he turned his back.

The footsteps continued upstairs, and it was the perfect time to clean the lungs he harvested earlier from the rude host who got him into this mess. He laid the lungs on a cutting board and removed the trachea along with the smoke-damaged parts. With all his weight, he pressed down to squeeze out the air and blood.

Meanwhile, Will walked down the corridor warily, pressing his ear against the doors to catch any murmurs before opening them. He peeked inside each one until he finally reached the intended door. Slowly opening the door, hugging the wall like an FBI. He poked his head first, checking. The Alpha wasn't lying; he was alone, but that didn't mean he was pure heart.

Will shut the bathroom door behind him, removed his peeling belt, and wrapped the ends around his hands. He turned on the water and waited behind the door. 10 minutes passed, and the Alpha didn't break in. He turned the knob slowly and opened it just enough to peek. The room was empty.

He breathed, keeping his gaze on the door as he bent down to take off three layers of socks and piled them together into a big ball, then his pale flannel shirt and undershirt without risking adding more holes. With a light touch, the pants slipped down, leaving his waist. He sighed and walked on, avoiding the mirror—nothing to see. Once he got under the warm water, he couldn't help but let out a blissful moan.

The water touching his body turned deep brown, a river of ink flowing beneath him into the drain. He cupped his palms together, gathering a puddle of tar dripping from his hair and beard. Lowering his head, he let his tears mix with the dark, murky water.

At this time, Hannibal seasoned the meat and lungs while the wine sauce was simmering. After washing and drying his hands, he headed to his room to change out of his flour-covered leather pants and get Will something to wear.

He changed into a maroon sweater and gray-maroon striped silk pants. Picking clothes for Will wasn’t easy, as they either looked baggy or extravagant. Ultimately, he settled on a black sweater and silk pants with green and gold stripes.

Hannibal knocked on the door politely, aware that Will was still in the bathroom. His nose caught the familiar, refreshing blend of lime and cedar wood—the unmistakable fragrance of his grooming products—and...?

For the first time, he wished his nose was wrong when the rich, aromatic scent of night-blooming jasmine and gardenia wafted powerfully through the room. A seductive, sweet-fruity essence, intensified by a cozy whisper of vanilla and oriental fragrances, filled his senses. It was a captivating blend—distinct and ripe, unlike any omega he had ever smelled.

Omega! Out of all the homeless people in the city, he picked Omega, tucked away under layers of stink that masked the pheromones and fooled his sensitive nose.

The bathroom door swung open, and clouds of pheromone-laced steam filled his lungs without permission. Hannibal stood there, holding clothes and towels as Will stepped out through the steam with those legs made of sugarcane. The wild curls had given up their charcoal color for a hot cocoa shade, and through the strands, Will's eyes sparkled with shock as he noticed him, and his arms rose like spears to block Hannibal's eyes and protect a bruised bone cage.

Hannibal put what was in his hand on the bed and rushed out, closing his eyes to erase the image from his mind. Bones and skin—that's all there is to say. If Mischa were still alive through the famine, would she look the same? If his uncle didn't adopt him. The idea hurt his heart and bothered his mind. Compassion would make it harder to kill the omega later; the butcher can’t be friends with the cow.

Minutes later, he returned to the kitchen to finish dinner, careful footsteps following him like a ghost from a safe distance. He pulled out a shiny frying pan from the bottom cabinet. As he turned, he spotted Will in the doorway, keeping a close eye on him.

Working under the eyes didn't bother him. So he turned up the heat on the frying pan and waited, his palm hovering above to feel the heat. He put some golden butter, watching it slide and melt with a satisfying sizzle. After shaking off the extra seasoning, he started dropping the pieces into the pan.

"Are you a pimp?" The question caught Hannibal off guard, and he accidentally dipped his fingers into the sizzling butter. He yanked his hand away, hissing. He switched off the stove and held his hand under the cool water. Will was watching, and Hannibal swore he saw a gloating smirk creeping onto his lips.

10 minutes later, Hannibal wrapped his finger in a damp towel and headed to the bathroom to put on clean bandages, letting out a deep breath. Just moments ago, he was a rapist; now he's a pimp. He closed the medicine cabinet and returned downstairs, finding Will still standing in the same spot.

Hannibal lit the stove again, using a fork this time to handle the pieces, just in case. The rest of the process passed in silence, filled with sharp glares that openly showed hate. After a while, he pulled out two plates, took the lung and loin slices out of the wine sauce, arranged them on the plates, and topped them off with tomato seeds, herbs, and some wild mushrooms.

Piled more food onto Will's plate; the omega needed extra weight. Will moved out of his way as he carried the plates into the dining room. Hannibal flashed a polite smile, but Will's lips didn’t seem to return the gesture.

In the dining room, Hannibal sat at the head of the table and pointed to the chair next to him. “Take a seat, Will.” Carefully, he picked up the fork and knife, trying not to touch his fingers, which were beating like a drum. As Alpha, he wasn’t about to show weakness in front of an Omega. So confidently, he sliced the piece in half, ignoring the pain.

Will stood in the doorway, his arms crossed tightly over his chest. His eyes drifted to a painting of a naked woman being fucked by a duck hanging above the fireplace and the scary

horns on the walls. Every part of this room screamed that the Alpha was a sadist, and he didn’t deny being a pimp when asked. A man this old wearing a leather suit? *Red flag!*

Will’s jaw tightened. “Are you one of those who poison the homeless?” His hand gripped the edge of the doorframe, ready to bolt at any moment.

Another accusation fell on his head like an anvil, but Hannibal remained calm. “I wouldn’t do that to food.” His hand slowly placed the fork and knife beside the plate, trying to show he wasn’t a threat.

Will took an unintended step forward, his fists clenched at his sides, raising his voice. “But you would do it to me!”.

Hannibal exhaled quietly, raising his hands slightly as if in surrender, but his eyes remained sharp. “I didn’t mean it that way,” Leaning back in his chair. “I know you’ve been through a lot, Will...You still have a chance to leave. But believe me, the lion is not in the room.”

Will approached warily and pulled the plate away, tearing the slices and herbs and mixing them. Hannibal watched him with interest and annoyance, unlike his face, which pretended to be indifferent. He had decorated the plate with calculated precision.

Will finished fiddling with the plate and tossed it to Hannibal, hissing. “Eat.”

Hannibal's lips resisted the urge to growl. “Oh, taste my own medicine,” he said, picking up a piece with his fork.

"Not that, " Will stopped him. "That one," pointing to another piece at the bottom of the shapeless food pile.

With his fork, Hannibal picked up the chosen piece as if there was a difference and chewed it, tasting all the ingredients in one bite. He swallowed, annoyed, as he liked to sense each flavor individually. "Did I pass your test?" Meeting Will's eyes.

“This,” Will pointed to another piece, this time to the side. Hannibal sighed, Will’s paranoia clouding his wits. He ate it and drank some water to wash away the overlapping flavors. “Can we have a normal dinner now?” pushing the plate back to Will.

Maybe the food is not laced or it's taking too long to show. Will's fingers tapped his crossed arms as he watched like a hawk, waiting for the alpha to choke or pass out. But he kept cutting those tasty, flavorful slices, dipping them in the glossy sauce, and stuffing his mouth.

Will took the plate and ran to the end of the table. His stomach growled, begging for food. He picked up a piece, eyed it, bringing it close to his nose, and sniffed it like a bloodhound. He took a crumb his teeth couldn't find to chew, so he swallowed. But his stomach roared, demanding more.

Ignoring the loud chewing and stabbing the plate. Hannibal focused on his own plate, not wanting to fuel the omega's paranoia. He cut a piece as he asked "How did you find me, Will?"

The chewing stopped. Hannibal looked up to read Will's face, whose cheeks were stuffed like a squirrel's, holding his fork like Poseidon's spear, shooting him a fierce look.

Will leaned back, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. Taking a moment to chew his food before talking. "You left breadcrumbs,"

Hannibal raised his eyebrows in wonder. "Bread crumbs?"

Will’s smirk grew darker. "I didn’t need much. Your name—people know it. Especially those who’ve been in your circles."

Leaned forward, sighing as the Alpha eyes turned *???* "You looked wealthy, so I asked the fallen from grace." Letting a whistle. "Turns out you’re famous. Your address fell into my lap for a buck."

Omega, speaking in riddles, or perhaps He was the one who failed to grasp the cryptic hints. Smoothly, he asked, “Fallen from grace?” And watched as the omega’s lips twisted into a frown, blaming him for his stupidity.

Will replied impatiently, "Wealthy j*rks like you who ended up broke and in the streets made a VIP homeless class."

Hannibal paused, unsure whether to be offended by being called a j*rk, flattered that he was famous among the homeless, or worried that his private info was being traded so easily. He hummed thoughtfully "So how do they know me?"

"Opera," answering while chewing.

Hannibal ignored the omega's elbows on the table; god, he could stab someone with them. "Can you be more specific... name?"

Will didn't raise his eyes from his plate, wrapping his arms around it as if it were going to flee, and muttered, "I'm not a snitch." Hannibal hummed.

After a while, Hannibal glanced over at Will's plate, which was now empty, and Will used his fork to scrape up the last bits of sauce. Will wasn’t the best dining companion, with serious etiquette issues. But Hannibal couldn’t help feeling pleased that Will unknowingly devoured human flesh. A strange sense of pride crept up his chest at the thought of feeding an Omega. “Did you enjoy the meal?” he asked, smiling proudly.

Will stopped licking the fork “I've had better.” won't give the Alpha anything to be proud of.

For a second, Hannibal's features twitched, and his hands clenched slightly on the fork and knife, ignoring his injured fingers."Sure. You did " Spitting through his gritted teeth.

Will cleared his throat, ignoring the fire in the alpha's eyes and drumming his fingers on the table in an offbeat rhythm."So... this job?"

Hannibal filled a glass of red wine and took a sip "I work in fashion and we're launching a new collection." The smooth tone turned commanding."I want you to be one of my models, Will."

Will rubbed his chin. No need to look in the mirror to know he lost his human self a long time ago. He got up, throwing his hands into the air with a bitter laugh. "Yeah, right. Out of everyone, you picked me?"

"You left all these people and chose me! A homeless fashion model. Oh wow."

Hannibal didn't flinch. His gaze remained steady, even though Will was making him dizzy with all the waving and loud whining."Yes, I did. What's the difference between you and those people out there, Will?" His tone softened, almost coaxing.

"You were one of them once, weren't you? A small twist of fate, and any of them could end up like you. And you… you can become them again."

Will crossed his arms tightly, but his eyes flickered with—doubt, anger, maybe even hope.

"I'm offering you more than just a role in this collection," Hannibal continued, softening his tone. "I'm offering you a chance to get your life back."

Will laughed bitterly "You think playing dress-up will fix my life?" clenched his fists.

Hannibal leaned forward, Will's laugh in his ears sounding like a car engine refusing to start. "No, not fix. But it could open doors. A shot at something better."

He paused, taking a sip before delivering his final push. “And it’s not just about you, Will. The money from this... will go to help omegas like you." His lips twitched in amusement. Bingo, he hit a nerve. The omega's eyes softened, and the gears of his mind began to be convinced.

Putting on a mask of sympathy, coloring his eyes with pity, and filling his voice with feathers. then pressed harder on the nerve."Those who've had it rough. You know what that feels like. You know how money can change lives, right?... it could change *your* life.”

Pressing more “ Will, many have gotten their lives back because they took the opportunity when it came. Don’t waste yours.”

Will’s fingers trembled as he rubbed his hands together, processing. He didn’t trust Hannibal —not fully. But the thought of reclaiming something, even a piece of himself. And what about the other's omegas? He feels responsible; even if he doesn't know them, he knows what they're going through.

Hannibal picked up the dishes and headed to the kitchen, giving Will time to think. He tossed them in the sink. As he stood there, he noticed the knife holder. His fingers brushed over the empty spot that looked like an eclipse, where his Japanese steel knife should be. He clenched his jaw. The omega has a knife...

He focused back on the sink as he heard the footsteps getting closer. Will cleared his throat, "So, how this...?" His fingers destroyed the sweater's sleeves.

"We'll take some digitals," Hannibal said, then quickly added, seeing Will's expression, "Nothing weird, Just normal shots."

Now, should he face the omega about the knife and kill him if he refuses to hand it over? Or should he lengthen the string so the omega feels like he’s in charge for a bit and see what happens?

Maybe the omega will attack him during the night. That thought sparked a dark thrill in him. That’s the real hunt, isn’t it? Tricking your clueless prey. He smirked inwardly. Fine, he’ll

give him the honor of trying. That way, when the time came to kill the omega, there would be no hesitation, no sympathy. Just the inevitable.

“We start tomorrow, Will. You’ll stay in the guest room,” his voice carrying the weight of finality.

Room + sadist Alpha Will’s eyes hardened, and without missing a beat, he shot back, “I’ll sleep in the garage!”

Hannibal raised an eyebrow, unfazed. “The room has a key, you know,” But Will insisted, “I’ll stay with my dog in the garage,”

Hannibal shrugged. He didn’t want to seem pushy and suspicious. In the end, the garage door is closed. “As you wish,” his tone cool, almost indifferent. “I’ll get you a pillow and blanket.”

And got an immediate response, “No need.”

Hannibal smiled—one not quite reaching his eyes. “I’ll still get them,” Without waiting for another protest, he turned, heading upstairs.

When he returned, the blanket and pillow in his arms, Will was already standing near the doorway as if preparing to flee. Hannibal handed the items over. Will took them as if they were bombs. He didn’t say thank you. Hannibal didn’t expect him to.

Winston raised his head and watched Will as he stepped inside. Will crouched down and gave him a friendly pat. "Hey there, buddy."

"Hold on a sec," he said, pulling the cardboard with the dog to the corner. He grabbed the wrenches from the organized tools on the wall and leaned them against the door to warn him if the alpha tried to break in.

Will picked up a screwdriver, just in case the knife didn't do the trick. After that, he carefully took the knife from his pants and settled next to Winston, curling up in the corner on a comfy feather pillow that made him whine softly.

He pulled the soft, cozy blanket over his legs, the warmth making his eyes water. With the screwdriver in one hand and the knife in the other, he fixed his gaze on the door, fully awake and alert, ready for whatever might come.

"Smart Omega," Hannibal smiled with amusement while watching him on the iPad through the garage's hidden camera. He secured all doors and strolled into his studio. Once the lights were on, he grabbed papers and pens.

With pain in his fingers and fashion week on his mind, sleep was definitely not on the agenda. Hannibal slid into his leather chair, waiting for inspiration to fall from the sky—or for the omega to attack.

Trust What is trust?

“The trust of the innocent is the liar's most useful tool.”

Stephen King

Tap, tap, tap. In a steady rhythm, the graphite tip kissed the white of the paper, each tap leaving a new dot that quickly disappeared into the vast gray abyss formed throughout the night. Each time the pencil brushed against his bandaged fingers, it sent a deliciously painful signal straight to his frustration-ridden brain.

Hannibal sank into the dismal sea of dots. His eyes lost as if the movement of the pencil had lulled him into a hypnotic trance. Disappointment—that's all he can say. It's the next morning, and the papers in front of him are still as white as his skull. It's not that he had never experienced a creative block before—everyone goes through such moments—but this felt different.

Could this be what Sogliato predicted at the previous fashion week? The end of his reign over the fashion world he had so long dominated? After all these successes, is this the moment when his creative fountain finally ceases to flow?

He always put spiteful words under his feet, using them as a ladder to reach the sky, leaving his rivals at the bottom, gnawing their fingers in jealousy and envy. Maybe it was finally his turn to gnaw his fingers.

Hannibal sighed deeply, dropped the pencil, and watched it roll across the paper, announcing the end of his journey. As he slumped back in his chair, defeated, his eyes slid to the iPad screen, where the sleeping Omega appeared in the garage.

Disappointment begets disappointment. The night had not only stolen his inspiration, but the Omega let him down as well.

Will lasted mere minutes before his head fell back against the wall. He didn't stir when his dog got up and settled atop the warm blanket between his legs—the blanket Hannibal would throw away later.

Hannibal knew that Will had slipped into dreams world through the widest door. Perhaps he had overestimated the Omega's courage.

The iPad's clock read 7:15 a.m. Hannibal got up lazily, stretching his exhausted body in a catlike stretch, his bones groaning in protest to remind him that he was no longer young. With the iPad in hand, he headed to the bathroom to start his morning routine. While showering, he kept glancing at the screen, watching over the Omega.

In the kitchen, humidity still clinging to his hair, Hannibal paused, unsure whether to wake the Omega for breakfast or let him sleep for a later meal. The sad Panda's circles around Will's eyes prove his lack of sleep. Besides, it was far too early for any confrontation, whether a screwdriver stab or a knife slash.

A sudden flash of lightning painted the kitchen walls a ghostly blue. *Boom* Thunder crashed overhead, followed by rain that sprayed against the windows like soft bullets.

Hannibal heard the dog bark and noticed the Omega moving. The universe had decided. They will share breakfast.

Woof, woof Winston's barking woke Will up, then *Boom* rumbled in his ears, followed by rain. He sat up, trying to find the tent zipper so they could get out before the river flooded. But his hands found nothing. Something wasn't right—his tent wasn't this big.

He forced his sticky eyes open, and his mouth dropped as darkness surrounded him. His stomach twisted with fear that he had gone blind, but he could still make out Winston's shadowy form in the dark. Was he stuck in one of his nightmares?

Will rubbed his eyes. His heart slowed when he saw gray daylight peeking timidly under the garage door. Garage?? It took a few minutes of staring for his mind's rusty gear to turn on again, like an old machine working after a long time. Yesterday's memories alternated in his consciousness like ants marching home.

His eyes widened when the realization hit him, and his shaking hands frantically searched the blanket for his weapons. Winston backed away, his nervous barking echoing through the garage.

Will jumped up as if he had been stung, shaking the blanket frantically in the air while cursing the warm, traitorous fabric that had swallowed his weapons. The screwdriver and knife hit the floor with a loud metallic clang, mocking him. Grumbling, he snatched them up quickly.

Winston brushed against his leg. Will bent down and hugged him. "Sorry," he murmured, feeling warmth blooming inside him. Winston seemed much better than last night—his bark was full of life.

He glanced at the door; the wrenches were still in place. Last night, he had fallen into a sleep as deep as a bottomless well. His body had betrayed all survival instincts, giving in to a warmth and comfort he hadn't felt in years. And that scared him the most—losing the vigilance that had always kept him alive.

Sleep had never come easily to him before—not when each passing night pulled him deeper into his past through endless nightmares. Not when strangers' footsteps turned into sirens in his head, and Winston's sudden barks meant another intruder lurking in the darkness around their tent.

Or when insects crawled into his clothes or mice ran over him. The pain that made him scream awake when cockroaches nibbled at his fingers.

The fear of his body temperature dropping and dying slowly—aware but unable to move his frozen limbs. Reasons piled up, layer upon layer, forcing his eyelids to stay open.

He had no idea what time it was—not that time mattered much in his world. Still, now that they were up, they had to wait for the Alpha's instructions. He didn't want Hannibal accusing them of stealing if they wandered into his house.

So he decided to keep himself busy for now. Will folded the blanket, placed the pillow on top, and neatly arranged Winston's blanket on the cardboard.

The tools were back on the wall. Will moved his shoes out of the way, proudly picked up the symbol of survival—his wet coat—and hung it over the door to dry. After tucking the knife into his pants, he and Winston settled into the corner, waiting.

Hannibal observed everything with an amused smile. At least the omega had some manners. He opened the fridge, his fingers dancing on the shelves as he hummed, searching for something dog-friendly. He chose homemade sausage link.

With measured steps, Hannibal walked toward the garage, hearing the dog bark to warn the Omega. He politely knocked on the door, careful to avoid the hanging rat fur. He felt foolish —he, Hannibal Lecter, was asking permission to enter his own garage.

Will patted Winston's head in a silent gesture to calm.

"Good morning, Will." Hannibal stood in the doorway. He'd hoped sleep would calm the Omega's nerves, but Will seemed even more alert now. "I'll make breakfast while you get ready," he said, holding up the sausage link as a peace offering. "I got breakfast for your dog."

Will stared at the red meat, his eyes full of doubt. He glanced at Winston, who was begging with hungry eyes, tongue hanging out and drooling, silently pleading for a taste. But years on the street had taught Will a harsh lesson: delicious-smelling food is the best cover to hide poison or drugs.

Hannibal took the long silence as rejection—a direct stab to his chest, even though he'd seen it coming. The unspoken accusation of trying to poison the dog stung unfairly. Even in his darkest thoughts about getting rid of the Omega, harming the dog had never crossed his mind.

His eyebrow rose slowly, provocatively. "Poisoning dogs, Will? Is that what you think of me?" The words came out cold as ice. "Why bother saving him just to kill him now?"

He ripped the raw sausage with his teeth, chewing slowly, then tossed the rest at their feet.

"If I wanted to kill you, Will..." He paused, letting the poisoned tone penetrate the air as his eyes locked with the Omega's in silent challenge. "Your dog would be the least of my worries. There are more elegant ways and faster than poison."

"Typical," Will thought. All Alphas think of themselves as little gods obsessed with violence and threats. He forced a submissive smile onto his stiff face, a thin veil hiding a volcano of hatred. "As you say, sir," he spat through his dry lips.

In his mind, he was riding the Alpha's chest, throwing punch after punch, breaking those sharp teeth, and sending crimson drops of blood splattering across the cold gray floor. His breath shook with the thrill of power that surged through him. Winston's cry snapped him back to reality.

"Eat," Will permitted Winston. He wasn't scared of threats, but the Alpha was still alive after the sausage. Winston was hungry, and he still had a knife.

Hannibal maintained a poker face and showed no reaction to the sarcasm. One look into the Omega's eyes was enough to know that Will had killed him countless times in his imagination. Still, Hannibal couldn't deny it—something dark and twisted stirred in his chest. interesting.

Fake vs fake. The corner of Hannibal's mouth curled in a chilly smile that didn't reach his eyes. "Good. I'll be in the kitchen." He turned to leave, feeling the Omega's gaze pierce him like a drill.

Will let out a deep breath once the Alpha was gone, his gaze landing on Winston, who was devouring the last of his sausage. "Greedy dog," he said, a grin spreading his face.

He made his way upstairs. In the morning light, the house looked less spooky, but it was not enough to erase the sense of lurking danger. Every piece of furniture and decor seemed to conceal a sinister tale. The gray light seeped through the windows, casting ominous shadows on the floors.

His face wrinkled in distaste—extravagance. It's a museum, not a house. Full of details in every corner. If you blink, you'll miss something.

Will took his time, studying the place for clues to expose the Alpha's intentions. He wasn't imagining yesterday. Those paintings were actually staring at him, and they weren't the only ones—the hanging deer heads too

After peeing and washing his face, he headed to the kitchen. The Alpha was sitting in a sandy leather chair tucked away in the corner, tapping on his iPad. Will lingered in the doorway, just as he had the day before, his fingers gripping the wooden frame tightly.

Hannibal didn't take his eyes off the screen, but he was aware of the Omega nearby, thanks to his sensitive hearing and the stinky fur smell clinging to Will's clothes. He had to admit—the

Omega had a faint, catlike gait. "Hello, Will," his voice was silky. "I'm ordering some things. Do you need me to add anything?"

"A home, food, medicine... everything a person needs to live, maybe?" Will thought, but he certainly wasn't going to say that. So he just said "no" with annoyance, biting his lip and regretting the last dollar he'd spent to get the address.

Hannibal hummed, rising from his chair."Figured we could make breakfast together, you know, so you can see the food is safe." He put the iPad aside.

"I'm very careful about what I put into my body, which means I end up preparing most meals myself," he continued as he took the ingredients out of the fridge, sliding a bowl of eggs over to Will. "We will make a little protein scramble to start the day. Some eggs, some sausage."

Heavy silence as they both focused on their tasks.

Hannibal broke the silence. "I want to apologize for earlier. I should’ve been more considerate." He vented his working frustration on the Omega, and deep down, his morals didn't support it, even with his usual feelings about Omegas, especially this Omega.

More heavy silence.

"These walls of distrust...will only make things complicated, Will." Hannibal broke it again, pretending to be busy chopping ingredients because he felt like begging Omega to speak with him.

"Trust?" Will said, picking up an egg and hitting it with excessive force, scattering the whites across the kitchen island. "Not what kept me alive." His words were coated with the bitterness of past experiences.

Hannibal raised his eyes from the parsley he was chopping to meet Will's eyes, sensing the weight of those words."Mmm, disappointment has shaped you, hasn't it? How long have you

been out there?

"14 years," Will muttered bitterly, cracking another egg as if he were breaking a memory.

The knife paused in his hand for a heartbeat."You were just a child," he stated, noticing the way Omega clenched his jaw in response, and Hannibal knew there was no storytime.

"Shouldn't you have people to handle that?" Will deflected, his tone deliberately rough.

Servants meant exposing his hidden stash and witnesses. “I prefer a more intimate household,” he replied, expertly putting the sausages in the pan. “Though I do hire help for parties when needed.”

Will's eyes narrowed, raising his head cautiously. "What kind of party"?

A chuckle escaped Hannibal. "Your mind goes to such interesting places, Will," he observed, clearly entertained. "Simply dinner with respectable people from the opera or work."

Will hummed, unconvinced, while he cracked the last egg. Task complete, he slid the bowl to the Alpha, avoiding eye contact, then withdrew to the corner chair, pulling his legs up to his chest like a child in time-out.

Hannibal silently observed the mess before him. He picked up the tweezers and carefully removed the fragments of eggshell, then poured the mixture into the pan and wiped down the counter.

It wasn't deliberate.

The Omega had sharp eyes like an owl spotting prey, yet his hands were shaking. Hannibal assumed it was either muscle weakness or nerve damage from poor nutrition, so he refrained from commenting on the mess—after all, he was the one who had asked Will to help.

He has to admit that survival instincts are baffling. This Omega has rocket boosters in his legs, and despite his scrawny body, he knocked out two cops weeks ago. Yet here he is, struggling to crack an egg.

Within minutes, Hannibal set up two plates, leaving Will free to choose his chair. Like yesterday, they sat at opposite ends of the table.

Like a great white shark, Will devoured the protein scramble, gathered the last bits on his plate, and shoved it into his mouth without pause or pretense of etiquette. He returned to the garage, leaving only a white plate and Hannibal alone at the table.

Sometime later, the doorbell suddenly chimed, making Will's heart jump—another stranger. He sneaked up, and Winston followed suit; both followed Hannibal's steady footsteps toward the entrance. They took cover behind the wall, peeking out cautiously, Will's white-knuckled fingers clutching the knife while Winston stood guard at his heels, tense, sensing his master's anxiety.

Hannibal opened the door to find one of the company employees delivering the purchases. He had never misused his position, but desperate times called for desperate measures—he couldn't leave the Omega or take him out and draw unwanted attention.

By the time Hannibal closed the door, Will had vanished, so he followed the trail to the garage and found Will sitting with Winston as if nothing had happened. "These are yours," Hannibal said, handing over the bags.

Will looked at him with feigned innocence. "What?"

"The outfit you'll wear for the digitals," Hannibal explained.

"But first, give the dog a bath." It was a mandatory step—there was no way he would present a stinky dog to the neighbors in hopes they might adopt. Passing over another bag, Hannibal added, "This one's for the dog." With a nod, he excused himself, slipping away.

The Omega logo on the bags gouged out Will's eyes. Even though reading was a distant memory, those words were as clear as a red neon sign—"For elegant omegas." His hand shot up instinctively to cover his scent gland in a desperate, primal gesture. "He knows," he whispered. Nervous.

Will inspected the bags—dog grooming supplies in one. In the others: underwear, cotton pants, sleeveless shirt. Heavy, high-heeled boots polished to a mirror shine, so clear he could see his reflection.

When his eyes landed on the price tags, his mouth fell open in shock. Even if the Alpha deducted these expenses from the promised thousand dollars, he would still be in debt—and that wasn't even counting Winston's vet bill, which he hadn't dared ask about yet. A frustrated groan escaped his throat as he snatched up the bags. "Come on, Winston," he called, heading toward the guest bathroom.

After toweling Winston dry, Will slipped into his new underwear. A soft gasp escaped his lips when the soft fabric touched his skin. He felt a surprising sense of gratitude because wearing the silk pants without anything underneath made him feel a bit odd, especially south.

Following the music drifting from the kitchen, they found Hannibal there. He smiled as he saw them, the sweet tropical scent of Winston's freshly shampooed coat wafting through the air. "Looks like I made a good choice," he remarked, eyeing Winston's clean fur.

Slightly tilting his head, he added practically, "Doesn't he need to relieve himself?"

Will blinked, hesitant to tell the Alpha that Winston had already done it in the bathroom drain. "He's fine," he replied quickly, hoping the Alpha wouldn't notice the lie.

Hannibal hummed softly as he reached for the elegant glass teapot. With practiced grace, he tilted it, steam rising as he poured the amber liquid into a delicate cup. Setting it before Will, he gave a slight smile, his voice calm as he said, "A special blend I think you'll appreciate."

It was an odd moment. Will stared at the amber liquid in the cup, then slowly tracked to the teapot, where strange, unfamiliar shapes drifted like tree bark through the brew. "Or. No!" he thought.

Anxiety slithered through his chest like a cold shadow. Without lifting the cup from the kitchen island, he tilted it cautiously, his eyes scanning for any suspicious residue lurking at the bottom.

The Omega's hesitation shone as brightly as the sun. Hannibal noticed how he inspected the teacup, his knitted eyebrows betraying clear distrust and reluctance.

Another stab at his intentions, a new accusation looming over his head. Hannibal raised the cup, took a slow sip, and set it back on the kitchen island. "It's entirely safe," he said, his voice laced with obvious disappointment.

Will waited several moments before bringing the cup to his lips. Warmth flooded his mouth, spreading down his throat like a gentle wave. A blend of mint, ginger, and other unfamiliar herbs danced on his tongue—it tasted surprisingly good, better than he'd expected. "Thank you," he murmured, hoping the Alpha wouldn't catch the word.

"My pleasure," Hannibal said with a smile.

Will tapped his cup nervously. "So, uh, when are we taking photos?"

Hannibal lowered the cup from his lips, his gaze settling on Will's drumming fingers. "Anxious to get started?" He asked, his tone carrying genuine interest.

"Just want to get it over and leave," came the curt reply.

"Is it that bad to be with me, Will?" The question was soft, but it carried a subtle sting.

Will's grip tightened around the cup until his knuckles whitened. "Being with anyone is that bad... Alpha."

That word—Alpha—meant to be music to his ears and a balm to his soul, as it would be for any Alpha hearing it from an Omega, turned into pure venom on Will’s tongue. He spat it like an insult, each letter dripping with a curse like a black Voodoo to exterminate the entire Alpha race.

"Well, I'm afraid you're stuck with me a bit longer." Hannibal set his cup aside, swallowing his disappointment."I'll do my best not to bother you. Just tell me when you're ready."

"Now!" Will said decisively, setting his cup aside.

Hannibal sighed at the Omega's stubbornness but admitted to himself that Will was right—the sooner they started, the sooner they finished. "Very well, go get dressed," he instructed.

Will slipped into the photo shoot outfit, which flowed over his body. Yet he felt naked in the sleeveless shirt. The boots hugged his ankles, adding extra height, but they felt as heavy as rocks on his feet. Of course, he didn’t forget the knife.

Hannibal waited downstairs, observing the scene with a satisfied smile—he had made the right choice with the pants, which gave the Omega’s slender legs a bit of fullness. However, the boots might have been a bit too much; the Omega swayed slightly as he walked, trying to adjust to their weight.

They headed to the studio. Hannibal turned before opening the door. “The dog stays here.” His tone left no room for debate—his sacred space was off-limits to anything with fur.

Will hesitated for a second but eventually nodded and commanded, “Winston, stay.” The dog settled obediently at the threshold.

Hannibal stepped inside, followed by Will, who walked carefully, his head spinning with childlike curiosity. “Wow!” the word slipped from his lips unconsciously, prompting a smile from Hannibal as he stepped aside to let him explore. His eyes followed the Omega as he moved like a butterfly that had just found a meadow full of flowers.

The room was spacious, with bright white walls bathed in modern lighting—a stark contrast to the classic house style, as if time had suddenly jumped to the future. On the right, mannequins lined up wearing unfinished designs, standing tall in front of a whiteboard covered in detailed drawings of the human body.

Will drifted to the left, where fabric racks. His fingers danced in the air, tracing the outlines of the different material rolls. Each textile seemed to call to him—lustrous silk, crisp cotton, fine linen—all arranged in a stunning spectrum of colors.

Gray daylight filtered through two windows, softened by sheer curtains that fluttered with the gentle breeze. Will paused in front of the desk, where a large drawing tablet rested amid books and papers arranged with obsessive precision. A smile crossed his face when he spotted the small-scale mannequins proudly showcasing tiny versions of Hannibal’s designs.

He picked up a colored marker from a vibrant box on the desk, uncapped it, and brought it close to his nose, which wrinkled at the sharp smell of alcohol. “So many colors,” he murmured, putting the marker back, then added in a faint, bitter tone, “I only had three as a kid.” The sadness in his voice didn’t escape Hannibal’s keen ears.

Will's eyes wandered among the fashion mood boards hanging on walls, showcasing models in captivating designs. His fingers lightly brushed the clothes hanging on rolling clothing racks, along with the paper pattern.

"More books," he remarked upon noticing another bookshelf that extended along the wall filled with books, magazines, and awards—it looked different from the ones scattered throughout the house, more modern and vibrant.

Hannibal found himself captivated—unintentionally—by studying Will's shifting expressions. His eyes captured every detail: the childlike fascination in Will's wide eyes, his lips forming a small O each time he discovered a new detail that stirred his amazement.

The wide smile, revealing small, sharp canines, added ferocity to his features—then, suddenly, sadness. Dark shadows invade his face without warning, sparking Hannibal's curiosity as he finds himself eager to know what bitter memories and thoughts are hiding in those eyes.

It was a rare, unguarded moment—seeing the usually defensive Omega so openly showing feelings other than hate. But what struck Hannibal most was his own reaction—or rather, lack thereof. For the first time, he felt no discomfort watching someone else move freely among his belongings, touching and exploring his private space. The realization was as surprising as it was unsettling.

Shaking off his thoughts, Hannibal moved toward the wall near the windows. He pulled down a professional photography backdrop, the material unrolling with a soft swoosh. With an expert move, he set up a digital camera on its tripod.

He wasn’t a professional photographer, not even a passionate hobbyist, but his job required him to take high-quality, detailed shots. Fortunately, money had never been an obstacle to acquiring the best equipment.

Will leaned his butt against the long table in the middle of the room, careful not to touch the sewing machines, watching as the Alpha set up the camera in front of the white backdrop. Then, connect the wires between the camera and the laptop.

"Stand in front of the camera," Hannibal instructed, his attention focused on adjusting the settings on his laptop.

Will stepped forward, his steps betraying a hint of hesitation, fingers gripping his pants in tension as he stood on the white backdrop. He wanted to get this over with as quickly as possible—he didn't know he was camera shy, or at least shy of those not owned by the police.

Just as Hannibal adjusted the camera settings, the Teletubbies' sun broke the gray sky with a cheerful laugh, casting its joyful light directly onto the Omega. Hannibal sighed as if nature had conspired to ruin his plans and prolong this exhausting day.

The model's portfolio photos demanded specific conditions—first, equal lighting on the model's face and body. So Hannibal grabbed the reflectors and set them around the Omega, balancing the lighting and softening the harsh shadows cast by the sun on Will's thin frame.

He aimed for perfection, leaving no room for anyone to drag his feet in the future scandal. In Will’s case, he knew that whatever he did would not help with his acceptance—and that was precisely what he was counting on.

He could see the headlines now, bold and damning: Fashion World Scandal: Hypocrisy at Its Finest! Two of the biggest fashion houses had closed their doors to a struggling Omega model, blocking his chance to work on a project meant to help other poor Omegas!"

Bedelia's refusal would mean financial losses and damage to her public image. That pressure would drive her crazy and alcoholic! Kade's fate would be even worse—Hannibal would expose her hypocrisy, shatter her supposed principles of healing the industry, and ruin her reputation as an Omega rights advocate.

The last one wasn't part of his plan, but fate added its ironic twist. Freddie Lounds and others like her will make Bedelia and Kade monsters for ages to come.

Hannibal started by taking full-body shots of the Omega, then moved to half-body shots. He adjusted the lens."Relax your shoulders," he instructed, focusing on the head and shoulders.

"Turn to the left... and soften that frown, Will," he directed as he took profile shots.

He grabbed a piece of black fabric from the scraps and handed it to Will. "Now, lift your hair." To Hannibal's surprise, Will's fingers glided smoothly through his unruly locks, gathering them into a small ponytail.

"Good, now put your hands in your pockets and bend your knees a little." Hannibal continued, guiding Will's poses. "Now into the back pockets... add a bit of flexibility... Will, the pout!"

At this point, Will was imagining smashing the alpha's head with the tripod, feeling his anger boiling within him.

"Will, turn. Will, your knee. Will, your neck. Will this, Will that, Will, Will, Will..." If he had known it would be this tedious and complicated, he would have fled in the night without hesitation.

"Show some Omega softness?" Really? He hadn’t been like the other soft, alluring Omegas. Since birth, he had to be tough to cope with poverty and protect himself.

"Okay, we're done," Hannibal announced with a smile

Will rolled his eyes."Finally!" he exhaled, glad to be free from the Alpha's endless instructions.

Hannibal knew that Will's patience was wearing thin after about the fifteenth photo when the frown and hatred in his eyes had turned to something darker. So he deliberately extended the photoshoot, taking more unnecessary shots just to tease Will. He hoped the Omega would eventually lash out.

Hannibal began packing up the camera and clearing the space, carefully organizing everything. "It wasn't so bad, was it?" His tone was laced with teasing amusement.

A faint scent reached his nose—a complex and nuanced scent. Wilted roses, with a hint of melancholy like stale air in an old, unused room. Carrying a touch of bitterness like an unripened fruit's taste. Much like the emotion it conveyed—Sorrow.

The scent was fleeting—Hannibal suspected poor nutrition was affecting the Omega's scent glands. It wasn't unpleasant, just a stark contrast to the pheromone Hannibal had smelled earlier.

Will was standing before the laptop, his wide eyes fixed on the screen in deep shock. Tears gathered at the corners of his eyes, like dewdrops on a leaf's edge. His parted lips and halted breath conveyed silent trauma. Hesitantly, his trembling fingers moved to touch his beard and cheek, as if verifying the truth of what he was seeing.

Hannibal quickly strode to the desk and shut the laptop. "Will..." he began, but the Omega turned on his heel and rushed out. Hannibal listened as Will's unsteady footsteps retreated before the sound of the bathroom door in the guest room slamming shut concluded the scene.

Hannibal decided to give Will some space, using the time to finalize his plan. Seated at the desk, he reviewed the digitals with a critical eye, selecting the best from similar shots.

Nothing was too much for the AI to handle. Hannibal removed the bruises on the omega's arms, attached the measurements alongside the chosen digitals, and sent everything to both Bedelia and Kade.

A few seconds later, his phone rang, and the screen lit up with Bedelia's name.

"Hel—" Hannibal started to say, but Bedelia cut him off, her tone sharp yet boring. "This Egyptian mummy won't set foot in my building!"

Hannibal licked his lip, the corners of his mouth curving into a sly smile.

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